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MINUTES

OF THE

State Convention,

HELD BY

THE BAPTIST CHURCHES,

IN

South-Carolina,

At Columbia, December 4, 1821.

AGREEABLY to a proposal and arrangement for forming a Convention of the Baptists in the State of South-Carolina, to meet in Columbia, on the first Tuesday in December, 1821—Delegates from three Associations appeared, viz. :—

Rev. Messrs. Richard Furman, William Dossey, Joseph B. Cook, William B. Johnson, Richard M. Todd, and Lee Compere, from the Charleston Association.

Rev. John Landrom, and Col. Abner Blocker, from the Edgefield.

Thomas Gillison, Esq. from the Savannah River.

Dr. Furman was called to the Chair, and Col. Blocker requested to act as Secretary; and the testimonials of the Delegates were read.

After prayer, and an appropriate address by the Chairman, it was agreed that the Delegates now met do form themselves, agreeably to their appointment, into a regular body, under the character of the Baptist State Convention in South-Carolina; whereupon Richard Furman was elected President, and Abner Blocker, Secretary.

1st. Invited the ministering brethren Pauling, Mayson, Manly, and Chrestman, who were present, to a seat in council.

2d. Resolved, that this body do consider their union as founded altogether upon principles of Gospel truth, Christian affection and liberality; having for their direct object the promotion of the cause and interest of the Redeemer.

3d. Appointed the brethren Furman, Johnson, and Landrom a committee to prepare a constitution for this body.

4th. Appointed the brethren Furman, Cook and Compere a committee to prepare an address to the several Associations in this State.

5th. After prayer by our brother Landrom, adjourned until 12 o'clock to-morrow.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 5.

Met according to adjournment. Prayer by our brother Dossey.

6th. The committee appointed to prepare a constitution for this body, reported, that the time allowed them has been too short for performing the duty assigned them, and ask for further time to complete their report. Agreed to.

7th. Invited Col. Davis, a deacon of Rock Creek Church, to a seat in council.

8th. After prayer by brother Cook, adjourned until next day, 9 o'clock.

THURSDAY, DEC. 6.

Met agreeable to adjournment. Prayer by brother Johnson.

9th. The committee appointed to prepare the constitution for this body, made their report; and the plan proposed was cordially adopted with the alteration of the 2d, 5th and 7th articles.

10th. Resolved, that copies of the minutes of the present meeting of this body, be forwarded at an early period to neighbouring Associations.

11th. Received the report of the committee appointed to prepare an address to the several Associations in the State. They stated that they had not been able to give it the finishing touch; but had made it out in substance; which, being laid before the Convention, was approved. Ordered that the President, at his leisure, revise and publish it with the minutes.

12th. Resolved, that the next meeting of this body be at Fellowship Meeting-House, (Edgefield District,) near Cambridge, on the Saturday before the first Sabbath in December next: The two first days to be devoted to devotional exercises: A sermon be delivered on Monday morning, introductory to business, by Dr. Furman; in case of failure, by Rev. Mr. Dossey.

The President was requested to superintend the printing and distribution of the minutes.

The meeting concluded with prayer by the President.

CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES,

AGREED UPON BY THE

Baptist State Convention of South-Carolina.

WHEREAS, by an address to the Baptist Associations of this State, which was circulated among the Churches of their connexion during the present and past year, it was made to appear, that it would be of great advantage to the denomination to form themselves into a State Convention, which should be a bond of union, a centre of intelligence, and a means of vigorous, united exertion in the cause of God, for the promotion of truth and righteousness; that so those energies, intellectual, moral and pecuniary, which God has bestowed upon the denomination in this State, might be concentrated, and brought into vigorous, useful operation: And whereas, Delegates from the Charleston, Edgefield, and Savannah River Associations, are, in consequence of said representation, convened at Columbia at this time, to whom the proposed measure appears to be proper, interesting and important—Therefore, we the said Delegates, (regretting indeed the failure of present co-operation on the part of the other Baptist Associations of the State, in the benevolent coalition we are forming, but indulging the hope, as well from communications received from some of them, as from the vast importance and interesting nature of the design, that, in future, such co-operation will be afforded,) do now agree upon the following outline of a plan for such union and exertion; but do designedly delay the definitive adjustment, until another meeting shall be held; that we may not be wanting in respect to our brethren, who are not represented in this body; and that we may improve the opportunity now afforded for affectionately inviting them to join in the benevolent, pious concert, whose blessed object it is to strengthen the bonds of spiritual union and intercourse, and thus to promote the glory of God our Saviour. But in prospect of this co-operation we now agree upon the following general principles

as the basis of union, and affectionately present them to the consideration of our brethren throughout the State.

1. This coalition of Associations shall be styled, "*The State Convention of the Baptist Denomination in South-Carolina.*"

2. The grand objects of this Convention shall be the promotion of evangelical and useful knowledge, by means of religious education; the support of missionary service among the destitute; and the cultivation of measures promotive of the true interest of the churches of Christ in general, and of their union, love and harmony in particular.

3. This Convention shall consist of Delegates from the Associations in this State; to whom may be added representatives from other religious bodies of the Baptist connexion.

4. The Convention shall have proper officers for conducting its business.

5. The Convention shall recognize the independence and liberty of the Churches of Christ, and consequently shall not in any case arbitrarily interfere with their spiritual or secular interests. But, when requested, will be considered as under obligations to afford them any assistance which may be in their power.

6. In regard to funds which may at any time be contributed for the promotion of the general objects here contemplated, discretion in their appropriation shall be exercised by the Convention, or by a board that they may appoint for the transaction of business; but no application of monies, given for a specific object, shall be made by them or their board to any other use.

7. In what relates to education, the organization and support of a seminary of learning in this State, for the gratuitous education of indigent, pious young men for the Gospel ministry, on a plan of accordance with the interests of that established by the denomination at large, in the United States, shall be considered by this body as an object of primary importance. Not but that other youth, whose education shall be paid for, may be admitted as pupils: it being distinctly understood, that the course of education and government, shall be conducted with a sacred regard to the interests of morality aad religion, on principles of Christian liberality.

8. With regard to missionary service the Convention will feel it their duty to have a special regard to its promotion, and to use their vigorous efforts to engage the most able, pious and suitable ministers of their denomination in the prosecution of this important design.

9. As duty and obligation unite to prove that religious education of children is a matter of primary importance, this Convention will feel it their duty to encourage the establishment of Sunday Schools, as well as the religious instruction of children in families.

10. This Convention proposes to embrace in its definitive plan, measures for collecting funds by means of charity sermons, societies, donations and bequests, for the purpose of carrying into effect the objects of its attention, upon those principles of liberality, zeal for God, and love to immortal souls, which the Gospel inculcates.

11. The whole plan here exhibited has been formed under a consciousness of entire dependance upon Divine Grace for success, in reference to the truth inculcated in that solemn declaration of Holy Writ, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Signed by order of the Convention, this sixth day of December, A. D. 1821.

RICHARD FURMAN, President.

ABNER BLOCKER, *Secretary.*

42377

THE DELEGATES

OF THE

Baptist Associations

OF

Charleston, Edgefield, and Savannah River,

IN

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

Met in Convention at Columbia,

On the 4th day of December, 1821,

TO THEIR CONSTITUENTS,

AND TO THE OTHER BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS

IN THE SAID STATE,

PRESENT THEIR AFFECTIONATE CHRISTIAN REGARDS.

Beloved Brethren,

As by the good Providence of God we have been permitted to assemble, and enter on the business of our appointment, which we consider as of high concern and common interest to the Baptist Churches in this state, in general, and as sacred to the honour of God; we deem it incumbent on us, before we close our session, to address you on the occasion, with sincere respect and Christian affection.

To our constitutents we feel authorised to speak, in the complacent language of congratulation, on the becoming part they have acted with philanthropy and zeal, in commencing the good work in which we are engaged: an undertaking which will, we trust, greatly contribute to the prosperity and peace of Zion, and bring a revenue of praise and thanksgiving to our Redeemer—Zion's glorious head.

Go on, brethren, in the good work you have happily begun! Be not weary in well-doing! You may justly indulge pleasing anticipations, while with pure motives you pursue your course, keeping noble objects and ends in view, and relying on the grace, power, and faithfulness of your covenant God. "For, in due season, ye shall reap, if ye faint not."—The objects you have selected for your particular attention and pursuit, are such as Heaven regards with favour; for they are connected with Immanuel's glory. The diffusion of Gospel light, and true science; the promotion of more perfect acquaintance, union, harmony and love among the people of God; the encouragement and aid afforded to pious young men, who are willing to devote themselves to God for the service of his Sanctuary, and to become the means of salvation to their fellow-men, though trials, labours and sufferings lie

in the way; the extension of Christian liberality; and the exercise of pious care over the young and rising generation, for their religious education and salvation, are objects which angels contemplate with delight; and on which the God of Angels looks with approbation.

You will perceive that we indulge a pleasing hope, that our brethren, who have not yet come forward to take a part in this scheme of piety, Christian benevolence, and noble effort, will not long forbear. Yes, we indulge the hope, that, however want of right information on the subject, misrepresentation, jealousy, discouragement, or any temptation of that great deceitful enemy, who opposes the truth and sows discord among brethren, may have hitherto prevented them;—yet when they come to be rightly informed, and have well weighed the subject, they will then no longer hesitate, nor feel reluctance, but take a decided, active part in the important, pious measure—You will see, that with a view to this pleasing event, and from a desire of giving the highest degree of perfection, in our power, to the system of rules, or constitution, by which it is intended the convention shall regulate its proceedings, we have left the formation of it definitively, or strictly considered, to a future day; that the aid of our brethren may be obtained in giving it the finishing touch; while yet, the great principles on which it is founded, are declared and established.

To our brethren who have not met us in Convention, we would say with sincere affection, and respect, that as it would have afforded us great encouragement, comfort and satisfaction, to have enjoyed their company and aid on this occasion; so the want of these has occasioned regret. We, indeed, entered with some reluctance on the business of forming the Convention in their absence; and had it not been for the firm persuasion we felt that the cause we had espoused, was the cause of God; that the call of his Providence, and the interests of his Church required immediate exertion, the tender regard we felt for the sentiments and feelings of our brethren, would have induced us to delay the transaction, till the churches of every Association concerned, had fully matured their thoughts on the subject, and consented to a cordial and vigorous co-operation. We trust, however, from the nature and design of the undertaking, that this will be the result; and in this confidence, we have ventured to make a beginning, relying on the Omnipotent arm and rich grace of Jehovah.

The nature and design of this coalition, or the reasons in favour of it, having been already set before you, in an Address from the Charleston Association, there is the less need for our enlarging on the subject at present.—But we would wish to obviate certain objections, which have been represented to us as existing in the minds of some persons concerned, whether founded in mistake, jealousy, or any other cause. First, some, it seems, have thought, that the Convention is formed with an intention to establish a governing power over the Associations and Churches. But it will be seen by the preceding outlines of a Constitution, that the Convention not only designs otherwise; but disclaims this power, and provides against all attempts which may at any time be made to establish such coersive power. Secondly, it has been suggested, that the monies which may be contributed to a fund, under the care of the Convention, will be arbitrarily disposed of by them, or placed at the disposal of the General Convention, so that the application of these monies will be made, ordinarily, to objects out of the immediate connexion of the contributors; to the neglect of those interests in which they feel themselves particularly concerned. Here again, refering to the constitutional principles we have agreed upon, we can assert that this objection is without foundation. By these it will be seen, that the right of having money applied according to the will of the donor, only, is expressly secured by a constitutional provision. To which may be added,

that among the objects fixed upon, for special regard, by the Convention, the greater number are such as require the application and use of money among ourselves. These are, the home missions; a respectable academy, at least, if not ultimately a college; and the support and education of students for the Gospel ministry, under the immediate care of the Convention, or its agents.

We are far from saying, however, that this Convention has no regard for the missionary service abroad, or to the support of the theological seminary at Washington, under the care of the General Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States. A large proportion of the churches in this connexion, are disposed, from principles of affection, piety and honour, to give support to these institutions; they having formed engagements to do so, and now believing that the cause of God, and the best interests of the churches at large, even those which are at home, are deeply concerned in their promotion. We are also persuaded, that when the churches, in general, come to be well informed on the subject, so as to make a right estimate, they will be of the same sentiment.

The general interests of the whole denomination, in the United States, are designed to be concentrated in the institution at Washington; and certainly, by the united exertions of the whole, in providing the means, the most ample provision may be made for affording *there*, the best assistance to students in divinity, and profound erudition. Under the care of the State Convention (and, especially, should generous individuals give their aid, in the manner some have signified they intended) a respectable academy may be formed, in which students would be prepared, by an acquaintance with the learned languages and the elementary parts of science, to enter the other institution with advantage. And it may likewise be of excellent use to others, who from particular circumstances may not find it convenient to go to Washington. In time, also, it might be hoped that, by the blessing of God, it would grow up to a fully organized college; should wise and liberal measures be pursued.

The General Convention, it may surely be expected, will be always so sensible of their high responsibility, and feel such concern for the cause of God; that they will be careful to have the true design of the institution carried into effect; and to have suitable instructors placed at the head of it; so that abuses may be prevented; or should they at any time take place, the disordered state of things be soon rectified. We trust it will be found to the end, to the satisfaction not only of the churches, but of the world, that those who now occupy that station are, not only men of distinguished abilities, but faithful to their trust. This is mentioned the rather, because in some places unfavourable representations have been made, and fears excited. The whole, according to our view, having originated in an unhappy personal dispute; which we lament, with respect to each of the parties. On this delicate subject we certainly should say nothing, were it not that the necessity of the case seems to require its being noticed. But from what has been stated, that it will be the duty of the Convention to see that none but faithful men are placed, or continued at the head of the seminary, every considerate mind will see that a rational and proper security is given, that the institution will be well conducted. So that fears and jealousies, which discourage the heart and weaken the hands in a good work, should not be indulged. The Convention can have no interest in supporting, or even countenancing a corrupt state of things here. The cause in which they act is the cause of God. Not the selfish personal interests of men, are to be promoted by this scheme of Christian benevolence; not ambition, self-aggrandizement, luxury, or avarice; but wisdom, truth, virtue, and holiness.—The diffusion of true science and Gospel light, and the advancement of Immanuel's kingdom, are the objects.

To the foreign missionary service we cannot be indifferent while we regard

the Saviour's sacred charge, "Go teach all nations," "Preach the Gospel to every creature;" while we remember, that of the poor Heathen there are hundreds of millions perishing in ignorance and sin; that we have missionaries, excellent men, actually engaged in the service; that the call of Providence, by which we were summoned and directed to the work, was too clear and loud to be disregarded, or mistaken; that God has been pleased to bless our efforts, however feeble, in the conversion of a number of idolaters; a number sufficient to form a Gospel church; and that too, in a place which may be considered as a strong hold of Satan; even in the powerful empire of Burmah; where gross superstition, and arbitrary power appear in their most odious and terrific forms; and where these converts have made their Christian profession under the menacing appearances of the persecutor's sword, avowing their willingness to die for the name of the Lord Jesus.

But should there still be any unwilling to contribute to the support of measures extending to objects which lie beyond their own immediate connexion; or others, who would give *these* more remote objects the preference; churches, societies and benevolent individuals, will be at full liberty to make their election: and bestow their contributions on that object to which they give their exclusive preference; and under assurances, that their benefactions will be faithfully, and we trust, successfully applied accordingly.

We trust the end we have in view, is really the Redeemer's glory; which if promoted by this undertaking, or by whatever means heavenly wisdom is pleased to direct, we shall rejoice. If that end is not answered in any undertaking, the undertaking can be of no real value.

Our commencement in this work is indeed, comparatively small; though, through the goodness of God, more than a hundred churches are comprehended in the Associations we represent. But were they fewer, we have great reason to be encouraged; when we reflect that through the blessing of God, great things have arisen from very small and weak beginnings. There are institutions, *now* of great magnitude, and evidently blessed of God, which *at first* were inconsiderable. Individuals who at their beginning watched them with a jealous eye, and withheld from them their aid; on obtaining better acquaintance with their principles, design and usefulness, sacrificed their prejudices on the altar of philanthropy, and became their most strenuous supporters. Among these institutions we descern one of honoured name, formed beyond the Atlantic, by the people to whom we are nearly allied in Gospel union, who from the great things they have achieved, by their undertaking, appear to be placed in the station of those "The King, of Heaven, delighteth to honour." These when going forth, a feeble band, relying on the arm of Jehovah, to attack the strong holds of sin and hell, said to each other, "Expect great things—Attempt great things." Being characteristic of their spirit and enterprise, these words became their motto; they proved animating to them in the exercise of faith, when entering on their work; and have been happily realized in their after experience, and attainments. To us they afford excitement and hope. To our view, great things are presented, and they call for our exertion. Great things connected with the love and glory of our Redeemer, the prosperity of his church, and the salvation of immortal souls. These also are our chosen objects.

Dear brethren, let us remind you, that this is a time of uncommon exertion among Christians of all denominations, and in every quarter of the globe. Much is doing in the cause of truth and holiness; and much is yet to be done, before the promises of the Most High will have their full accomplishment; that the church may come forth in her strength; that she may arise and shine in all the beauty of moral, intellectual, and spiritual excellence; and that the earth may be filled with the knowledge and glory of God.

For the accomplishment of his gracious, sublime designs, God condescends

to use the instrumentality of feeble men, even men like ourselves. Shall *we* then, who profess to love him, and are called to the high honour of being "Workers together with him," in his sacred cause, remain inactive and negligent? We are ready to say, God forbid! No; let us rise to vigorous action, concentrate our energies and exert them in the service of our God.

It takes some time for the individual workman to build a house, or the single labourer to clear a field; certain parts of the work likewise are such, that each one is more than the individual can perform unaided. But many hands united, give success and speedy execution to the enterprise. If to an invading enemy, a state should oppose in battle only a small number of companies, or regiments at a time, keeping its force divided; a few thousand of these invaders, acting together, might soon subdue that state, however strong in numbers. While on its united forces, ten times the number of enemies, could make no impression, and might be beheld by them with contempt.—These considerations direct us to united, as well as vigorous exertions in the cause of God.

Did the Lord carry on his great designs among men by miraculous interposition only: or without the use of means; we might find some excuse for our inactivity. But both revelation and experience teach the contrary. *That* calls us to activity, in the service of God, and declares us criminal when we are negligent; *this* shows, and proves to us, the benefit arising from those active pursuits. We should also consider, brethren, that the enemies of truth and religion are active; they act with vigour; they act in concert; and leave no means untried to effect their purposes. And shall it be said of the friends of religion, that they alone are inactive, indifferent, or wanting in united effort? O! let not this be said. Let us arise, to vigorous, united exertion; let us have one common cause; and let that be the cause of truth, of wisdom, of benevolence, of righteousness—the cause of religion and of God! We are fully persuaded, dear brethren, that the objects to which we have invited your attention, and the measures we now recommend, are included in this cause; that the welfare of the church, the good of immortal souls, and the glory of God are intimately connected with it.

Let us then entreat you to give it a serious and candid consideration; bear it on your hearts before the Throne of Grace; and seek direction of God, as your duty is concerned in it. And should it appear to your understanding and conscience, that it is such a cause; we must farther entreat you, to suffer no delay. Such is the state of things with and among us, that we may truly say with David, "The king's business requires haste." Israel suffered severe reproof from their God, when they said, "The time is not come: The time for the Lord's house to be built." "Is it time," said Jehovah, "O! ye, for you to dwell in your ceiled houses, and for my house to lie waste?"

Wishing you the choicest blessings of Providence and Grace, and requesting remembrance in your prayers, we remain,

Beloved brethren, yours affectionately in the Gospel,

RICHARD FURMAN, *President.*

ABNER BLOCKER, *Secretary.*

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